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DEVELOPING SOF RPA

by

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Biography

Col Michael A. Bruzzini is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. Col Bruzzini has been associated with Remotely Piloted Aircraft for the past 10 years. He started his RPA career graduating from the Formal Training Unit as the Distinguished Graduate and Academic Award Winner in 2004. He upgraded quickly to mission commander, Instructor and Evaluator pilot in less than a year. In 2004, Col Bruzzini commanded the 15th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron at Balad Air Base, Iraq during the first-ever Iraqi elections. In 2005, Col Bruzzini was hand-picked to stand up the 30th Reconnaissance Squadron as its first-ever Director of Operations where he brought advanced RPA concepts to the Combat Air Forces from Tonopah Test Range. In 2007, Col Bruzzini became chief of programming for MQ-9s and worked directly with the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff on the RPA 50-CAP acceleration plan. In 2008, he deployed to Cannon Air Force Base to help transition the 3rd Special Operations Squadron from Nellis AFB to Cannon without standing down a single CAP during the transition. In 2009, Col Bruzzini stood up AFSOC's MQ-9 squadron, the 33rd Special Operations Squadron. In 2011, Col Bruzzini stood up the 449th Expeditionary Operations Group, establishing the first-ever RPA group in AFRICOM. Col Bruzzini joined AFSOC Headquarters as the Deputy Chief of ISR and Strike Requirements in 2011 before entering Air War College in 2013. Col Bruzzini is a command pilot with 3300+ total flying time, 390+ Combat hours, 1400+ Combat support hours in the KC-135, F-16, MQ-1 and MQ-9. In the words of his previous group commander, Brigadier General Jim Slife, "Mike is SOF's most credible RPA leader...I know them all!"

Abstract

Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) stood up Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Operations without establishing the requirements to fully integrate within Special Operations Forces (SOF) operations. The demand for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) was insatiable and short cuts were taken in order to provide a nascent capability versus nothing at all. This lack of SOF integration has caused AFSOC RPA operations to fall short of SOF expectations. In order to meet those expectations AFSOC RPA operations must change. The purpose of this paper is to identify changes required in AFSOC RPA training and employment in order to advance AFSOC RPA capabilities commensurate with SOF levels of excellence. Special Operations live by five truths, which emphasize the distinct characteristics making Special Operations "Special." Using the Five SOF truths as a measuring stick, this paper will demonstrate current AFSOC RPA lack of implementation. After integrating the recommended changes, AFSOC RPA operations will fulfill every SOF truth. In the end, by changing the method in which AFSOC trains and employs its RPA force, AFSOC will convert RPAs flown by SOF units into SOF RPAs.

Special Operations Forces are a source of deep national pride. Their ingenuity, perseverance, spirit, and skill are unprecedented. In significant ways, our forces are creating visible and dramatic effects of the greatest magnitude across the globe. I consider it a profound honor to lead such an extraordinary group of professionals.[1]

Admiral William H. McRaven, Commander, United States Special Operations Command

Introduction

In early 2005, Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) sent two Lieutenant Colonels to Nellis Air Force Base in order to stand up a Special Operations Forces (SOF) Remotely Piloted Aircraft capability. Lt Col Pete Lehew, the first AFSOC RPA Detachment Commander, arrived with two directions from General Stanley McChrystal, "Fix the communications and fix the continuity."[2] Lt Col Lehew was initially tasked to provide only two RPA Combat Air Patrols (CAPs) flying in direct support of SOF forces. He was able to select some crewmembers with previous SOF experience; however, the majority had fighter and mobility aircraft backgrounds. Nevertheless, two CAPs were not enough for SOF. By the fall of 2005, the USAF converted an entire Air Combat Control (ACC) RPA squadron into the 3rd Special Operations Squadron (SOS), executing a total of six CAPs. SOF's demand for more intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) was insatiable, and the 3rd SOS was created with crewmembers from every background except SOF. The squadron received no time to train for SOF-specific missions, no time to develop habitual relationships with their supported SOF ground forces, and no time to understand what it means to employ RPAs in a SOF-specific manner. This was not the way to stand up a special operations unit.

Special Operations Forces have a unique culture. A distinct warrior ethos developed over time, and these values must be lived in order to fully embrace or understand. The foundations for these principles are the Five SOF Truths:

1. Humans are more important than hardware.

2. Quality is better than quantity.
3. SOF cannot be mass produced.
4. Competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur.
5. Most Special Operations require non-SOF support.[3]

When the 3rd SOS stood up, these foundations were ignored. Reviewing the activation of the 3rd SOS under the microscope of the five SOF truths reveals a very disheartening level of neglect. Truth one: the 3rd SOS was given some special equipment, but the crews were not trained to fully implement it. The crews were not hand-selected nor given SOF-specific training prior to commencing combat operations. The RPA CAPs were more important than the crews flying them were. SOF wanted RPAs (hardware), the crews (humans) mattered less.

Truth Two: the number of CAPs was increased from two to six instantaneously. Crews were not given time to develop. Missions flew regardless of whether or not the crews understood the ground forces SOF-specific requirements. Aircrews could fly the plane; hours and sorties were the only metric that mattered. Aircrews were ill prepared to execute SOF missions. They were selected because they were qualified to fly RPAs, CAP quantity was more important than quality.

Truth Three: Changing patches overnight does not make a squadron special operations qualified. The 3rd SOS was mass-produced without time to develop into a SOF force. Operation Eagle Claw, the failed Iran hostage rescue attempt, taught SOF forces that it takes more than a patch on a uniform to create Special Operations Forces.

Truth Four: SOF needed more ISR immediately. Instead of waiting to train crews, non-SOF crews were thrown together to form a unit. SOF forces needed near-real-time video

yesterday. The lack of intelligence reached emergency status. The 3rd SOS was activated after the emergency occurred without time to adjust.

Truth Five is not a SOF-specific character trait which does not add value when contrasting conventional and non-conventional forces so it will not be addressed further by this paper.

A SOF *unit* flew AFSOC's RPAs, however, by not embracing any of the SOF truths the unit was not truly *SOF*. In the summer of 2011, AFSOC Headquarters conducted a deep dive investigation into SOF RPA operations. Col (retired) Bill Lane, AFSOC's requirements Division Chief of Strike and ISR led the investigation. His team briefed Lt Gen Fiel, Commander Air Force Special Operations Command, in October of 2011, "If AFSOC was going to continue to operate the way we currently do, we should give all our RPAs back to ACC. If you want to develop true SOF RPAs, then AFSOC needs to modify how we train, and employ our RPAs."[4] So how does AFSOC need to change?

Thesis

This paper will demonstrate the initiatives required to develop a unique Special Operations RPA force capable of training and employing in a manner consistent with the first four SOF truths. I interviewed multiple SOF operators during the research of this paper. Their first-hand accounts and perspectives appear throughout the text. In the end, this paper will provide the roadmap required to convert RPAs flown by SOF into true SOF RPAs.

Training

SOF does not become SOF without intensive training. Special Operation Forces conduct the most difficult missions under the most difficult circumstances. General Albert Elton II, the previous 27 Special Operations Wing (SOW) Commander and qualified RPA pilot states, "SOF

is called upon to conduct high-risk, high-payoff missions. Specialized training mitigates that risk and leads to success."[5] SOF forces need to train at a high level in order to execute the Presidential level missions assigned to SOF forces. This training requirement necessitates appropriate training facilities.

SOF-Specific Range

Melrose range is located approximately 10 miles west of the 27th SOW, Cannon Air Force Base, home of two AFSOC RPA squadrons. Currently, these squadrons only conduct one or two sorties a week in order to maintain currency. Currency in pilot vernacular means pilots can *only* safely fly and land the aircraft. Currency is not proficiency. Proficiency entails the ability to not only fly the aircraft, but the ability to execute complex missions. Currency is not enough for special operators; SOF forces expect and demand the highest levels of proficiency among their ranks. General Elton articulates this expectation perfectly. "I need my RPAs to conduct the most highly difficult, highly coordinated, highly orchestrated missions--not the routine missions. Any C-130 crew can land a plane. It takes SOF training to land at night, lights out, on night vision goggles, to an unprepared dirt strip marked by SOF forces behind enemy lines on the first try so surprise is not compromised."[6] The 27 SOW range control converted an ACC fixed-target conventional range into a dynamic SOF training complex. The range now contains four-to-five story buildings to simulate an urban environment. Multiple dirt strips surveyed and stamped into the hard caliche plateau provide for realistic SOF training. Moving targets, laser targets, and the ability to drop inert 500-pound bombs from MQ-9s in close proximity to ground forces greatly enhance SOF skill sets. Full-scale mock-ups are possible and crews now have the ability to train as they plan to fight. Sharpening individual skills makes

crews more proficient and more SOF-like. AFSOC has taken the first step by developing a SOF-specific range. Range enabled SOF-specific mission execution is the next step.

SOF-Specific Multi-platform Integration

AFSOC RPAs need to conduct integrated airborne operations with other SOF platforms. Colonel Lewis Jordan, AFSOC A51 and SOF aircrew member for over 23 years, states, "RPAs must develop a habitual relationship with other SOF forces."[7] What is a habitual relationship? It is the bond and trust developed between team members that only grow after intense coordination during multiple scenarios. On a football team, all members of the offense know their job and understand how they must respond after the ball is snapped. After playing with one another for a whole season, the interaction becomes second nature. Airborne SOF forces need to be able to interact with one another as if it was second nature. When lives are on the line and every subset of a mission is high risk, every crew must trust the other crews to perform their part of the mission flawlessly. "SOF team members know each other, trust each other, brief and debrief together; building clear and open trust relationships," states Col Lane who flew in AC-130 Gunships and has over 28 years of Special Operations experience.[8]

Melrose Range allows all units in the 27 SOW to conduct combined missions over the high desert of New Mexico. Multiple platforms need to conduct integrated missions multiple times a week in order to develop that inherent knowledge and faith in the other units' capabilities. Before the mission, crews brief together fully articulating the mission objectives as well as each platform's roles and responsibilities. During training mission execution, Murphy's Law will occur and crews must react to counter. Post mission debriefs with the same crews leads to Tactics Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) refinement. This cycle repeats until crew interaction is second nature. Aircrews develop SOF habitual relationships, deepening trust, and

raising the level of performance upon completion of each complex scenario. Nonetheless, the airborne integration is only a part of the required integration.

SOF-Specific Ground Force Integration

SOF *ground* forces must next conduct and integrate missions with multiple platforms, including RPAs, at Melrose range. Penetrating airlifters, CV-22s, can deliver SOF ground forces in close proximity to target objectives while AC-130 gunships, U-28 manned-ISR platforms, and RPAs perform armed over-watch and Close Air Support during combined mission execution. As discussed above, intense pre-mission briefs detail objectives and assign responsibilities for every aspect of the multi-unit ground engagement. During execution, assaulters learn to depend on RPA teammates as they conduct live exercises under the watchful eyes of the Predators and Reapers. Post mission debriefs and lessons learned discussions bring a better understanding of individual capabilities. All SOF members sharpen their individual skills, while developing an appreciation for the other teammates force multiplying effects. The RPA pilots stop being only a voice over the radio, and become a face with a name. Lt Col Pete Lehew emphasizes what that means to SOF warriors. "I trust Pete because I have worked with Pete during training—Pete has my back."[9] Trust is required for all SOF missions.

This trust leads to better mission execution. Every team member is dedicated to every aspect of the mission and is empowered to use their expertise to make the mission more successful. According to Maj (retired) Jon Graham, previous MQ-1 mission commander, "This level of interaction allows every member to embrace the entire mission, provide input to maximize effects, minimize risk, and ultimately ensure success."[10] SOF forces routinely execute the most difficult missions because of this level of expertise. SOF empowers others through trust and habitual relationships. Training exercises establishes this relationship. General Douglas

MacArthur famously said, "On the fields of friendly strife, are sown the seeds that on other days and on other fields will bear the fruits of victory."[11] AFSOC's RPAs must train with other SOF entities, ground and airborne, in order to fully integrate within the SOF enterprise. It is during this SOF training that SOF RPAs incorporate innovative technologies into special operations future capabilities. The next section discusses some of those RPA SOF-specific capabilities.

SOF-Specific Equipment

"Through the foresight of Congress, USSOCOM is empowered by unique legislated budget and acquisition authorities in Major Force Program-11 (MFP-11). MFP-11 allows rapid and flexible acquisition of "SOF-peculiar" equipment and modification of service common systems to meet special operations requirements," stated Admiral William McRaven during his USSOCOM posture statement to Congress.[12] Initially, AFSOC and ACC RPAs were similarly equipped. ACC has lead command responsibilities, which determined upgrades to the entire RPA fleet. This fact needs to change, and AFSOC is starting to diverge from ACC commonality. "A C-130 flown by Air Mobility Command does not have the same configuration as an AC-130U flown by AFSOC," states Col Jordan. "Likewise, AFSOC's RPAs need additional unique modifications."[13]

AFSOC has started to use its special acquisition authority to modify and upgrade AFSOC RPAs. Specifically, AFSOC upgraded its MQ-9s with High Definition full motion video sensors in January 2012. These Hi-Def sensors required different aircraft software that has not yet completed full test and compliance. As AFSOC developed its own software, other SOF-specific capabilities have evolved. Due to the classification of this paper, these other capabilities are not covered. This AFSOC-specific software updates every six months, adding different capabilities to only AFSOC's RPAs. ACC software upgrade timelines are closer to three years. Having

different software incurs risk; however, AFSOC can accept and mitigate this risk through training. AFSOC can conduct training with these new capabilities in a controlled environment at Melrose range before integrating them in combat. AFSOC RPAs are located at only one base, so it can develop, tailor, disseminate and control academics and thus minimize risk while increasing capability. AFSOC can assess these capabilities with multiple SOF forces. If upgrades are successful, AFSOC integrates them with platforms downrange. If upgrades do not meet operational requirements, AFSOC discards them. Having uniquely configured RPAs with advanced capabilities flown by specifically trained aircrews integrated with SOF ground forces is another step to making AFSOC's RPAs more SOF-like.

Analyzing training initiatives with the first four SOF Truths

It is now time to examine how the first four SOF truths apply to AFSOC's RPAs after implementing the above changes. The first SOF truth is "humans are more important than hardware."[14] Modifying Melrose range, ensuring AFSOC RPAs train alongside SOF air and ground teams and developing advanced SOF capabilities are all investments in human capital. These recommendations emphasize the importance of the RPA operators. AFSOC integrates new equipment on their RPAs only after successful training and operational exercises prove the capabilities. Ultimately, the emphasis towards training fulfills the first SOF truth.

Second truth, "quality is more important than quantity."[15] By focusing on training, AFSOC is determined to make their crews the best they can be. It is no longer important to stand up more CAPs, instead crews focus on developing tighter training standards and improving levels of performance through full range SOF exercises and mock operations. Admiral McRaven stated, "SOF are uniquely recruited, assessed, selected, and trained to perform difficult missions, the projected 3-5% growth rate through FY 2017 is the maximum rate of growth that is

sustainable."[16] The USSOCOM commander emphasized the inability to maintain standards if growth is not capped. The above initiatives to AFSOC RPA operations focus on making RPA crews better at their jobs. Excess capacity performs training missions vice additional CAPs. Expect the quality of AFSOC RPA crews to increase, not the quantity. These initiatives fulfill the second SOF truth.

SOF truth number three is "SOF cannot be mass produced."[17] These changes emphasize training crews before flying them in combat. Crews develop into Air Commandos through bi-lateral and multi-lateral exercises with air and ground SOF forces. AFSOC crews become SOF, building habitual relationships and trust with their fellow SOF warriors. Crews no longer just put on an AFSOC patch and fly SOF missions immediately after RPA graduation. AFSOC RPA crews receive specialized training emphasizing SOF integration and execution. These initiatives ensure AFSOC RPAs accomplish the third truth.

Truth number four is "Competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur."[18] AFSOC's commitment to training develops a flexible responsive force ready to integrate in SOF-specific missions. AFSOC RPAs train to multiple SOF scenarios, not just the current ones conducted in today's conflict. One cannot predict all mission sets required by SOF forces. However, by integrating AFSOC RPAs in training exercises on Melrose range, they develop multiple TTPs with other SOF forces. When it comes time to modify TTPs, they participate in planning conferences and are ready to employ alongside their SOF teammates. Training together creates a cohesive team. Training AFSOC crews is essential to fulfilling the fourth and final SOF truth. The above initiatives create SOF RPAs consistent with the first four SOF truths.

Employment

This paper has described how AFSOC RPA training must change, so too must AFSOC RPAs employment change in order to create SOF RPAs. Currently, AFSOC conducts RPA operations via Remote Split Operations (RSO). A small footprint of three-to-four crews deploy forward to take-off and land RPAs, while the majority of the unit remains in the Continental United States (CONUS) to fly the mission. The crews forward deployed only launch and recover RPAs, and do not have visibility into current combat operations after the RPA leaves the traffic pattern. The RPA crews conducting the mission over the target areas are more than 3000 miles away from SOF ground forces. Although briefs between aircrews and teams occur over the phone, these interactions do not develop the bond necessary for SOF operations. "Virtual presence is actual absence," states Gen Mullen, previous Chairman Joint Chief of Staff.[19] As AFSOC RPAs benefit from developing habitual relationships in training, so to must AFSOC RPAs employ differently than the current RSO construct in order to become more SOF-like.

Joint Operations Readiness Training (JORTS) Cycle

Special Forces execute operations under a JORTS cycle. Units train for approximately 120 days, deploy for 120 days, and then reconstitute for 120 days on a continuous cycle. In the previous section, this paper emphasized required training in order to integrate AFSOC's RPAs with SOF forces. "All the gains in training will be lost if you are not present for the 'actual' mission," emphasizes Gen Elton.[20] "Training for a marathon is one thing, running the marathon is the true test," reinforces Col Jordan.[21] AFSOC has to move away from RSO, and bring a large footprint forward to be with the teams. Col Bill Lane states, "I learned just as much in the chow hall and weight rooms as I did during briefs and debriefs."[22]

By not being collocated with the combat forces during actual combat missions, habitual relationships break down and trust is lost. Teams build habitual relationships during the 120-day training portion. Imagine the amount of trust gained during actual combat missions when lives are on the line. Trust and performance surge during mission execution, as one must place their lives in the hands of fellow SOF warriors. Lastly, as the team remains together through the reconstitution period performance increases and personal bonds intensify even more. During reconstitution, teams pass along lessons learned to the training teams conducting their 120-day training period. Furthermore, during reconstitution, combined crews have time to reflect and develop out-of-the-box solutions for future scenarios. RPA and SOF ground teams can share these considerations, implement, and optimize tactics during their next joint training phase. "The synergistic effect of linking up RPAs with SOF forces during the JORTS cycle will exponentially increase combat capabilities," according to Gen Elton.[23] AFSOC RPA crews and SOF forces can train, deploy and reconstitute for years with matched JORTS cycles. Maj (retired) Jon Graham states, "We have to find a way to deploy with our brothers in arms."[24] The next section depicts such a method.

MCE/LRE Forward Concept

The small RPA force that deploys forward is the Launch and Recovery Element (LRE). The Mission Control Element (MCE) is the large portion of the force that flies the mission from CONUS. It is possible to deploy a combined MCE/LRE forward team, collocated with SOF forces. In this manner, the deployed crews would not only launch and recover the RPA, but also conduct the entire mission from the deployed locations. Extensive bandwidth, specialized networks and unique communication equipment is required to conduct MCE operations, which is one reason MCEs are located stateside. SOF forces execute command and control (C2) from a

forward Joint Special Operation Air Detachment (JSOAD). The JSOAD has the bandwidth, communications, and network backbones in order to effectively C2 SOF forces in theater and still maintain contact with stateside leadership. AFSOC RPA forces can utilize that infrastructure in order to conduct operations forward. By collocating AFSOC RPA crews with SOF C2, AFSOC RPA crews can now execute missions downrange with the ground teams. MCE/LRE is the solution to joining AFSOC RPAs with their SOF brethren in combat. MCE/LRE operations also provide a secondary benefit; Combining the MCE and LRE requires fewer total crews. Excess crews enable additional advanced training sorties with SOF forces, again adding to the synergistic effects described in the previous training section. These crew efficiencies should not stand up more CAPs for two main reasons. First, LRE is a special qualification that requires more training to remain proficient. If crews do not train, MCE/LRE qualified crews become non-current and the ability to sustain MCE/LRE operations cease after one rotation. Secondly, the benefits of increased training opportunities articulated in the first section remain a higher SOF priority than CAP numbers. The MCE/LRE collocated with the SOF C2 is critical in developing SOF RPAs.

SOF Command and Control

When SOF RPAs converted from ACC to AFSOC, USSOCOM did not elect to transfer the command and control structure from conventional forces. RPAs are the only AFSOC weapon system not underneath SOF C2. This has led to several instances where RPA support was pulled away from SOF units in order to support conventional forces. Furthermore, dynamic re-tasking to support higher priority SOF missions required excessive coordination in order to re-task SOF RPAs from conventional C2 and thus missed opportunities.

SOF forces that have trained together have developed an expectation for support. Redirecting that support during critical mission execution erodes trust. Col (retired) Lane claims "If you aren't going to be there when I need you, if I can't depend on you, then I don't want you."[25] SOF cannot always inform conventional C2 the nature of their operations. Conventional leadership has unknowingly pulled AFSOC RPAs off target during the most critical time, causing mission degradation. Conventional C2 executing weather recalls has forced some AFSOC RPAs to return to base despite having SOF ground forces in contact with the enemy. This is unacceptable! "SOF Command and control is the single most important factor for AFSOC's RPAs," states General Elton.[26] General McChrystal emphasizes what SOF C2 brings to the fight, "In August 2006, we were up to 300 raids a month--ten a night. This meant the network now had to operate at a speed that was not even considered before, not in our wildest dreams."[27] The SOF C2 was able to operate at this pace continuously in Iraq and Afghanistan. RPAs outside of SOF C2 were not included in emerging SOF missions. SOF C2 brings flexibility unmatched by conventional C2. To integrate AFSOC RPAs into future SOF operations, SOF RPAs must fall under the flexibility of SOF C2.

Furthermore, as previously stated, MCE/LRE forward operations are dependent on SOF C2 connectivity, bandwidth, and specialized networks to conduct SOF-specific missions. Conventional Combined Air Operations Centers (CAOCs) do not have these specialized capabilities necessary to integrate AFSOC RPA into SOF missions and thus SOF RPAs cannot operate at conventional CAOCs. RPA crews need to be able to conduct limited distribution mission briefings with other SOF teams. SOF teams can conduct limited distribution briefings face-to-face at secure SOF C2 facilities. If AFSOC RPAs are the only platform not collocated with the rest of the teams, they will not be integrated. MCE/LRE cannot operate without SOF

C2. In order incorporate AFSOC RPAs into the SOF enterprise, they must be united under SOF C2.

Operations Processing Exploitation and Dissemination (OPS/PED) Integration

A final initiative AFSOC should pursue is a revolutionary way of integrating RPA flight operations with AFSOC Intelligence units. The US Air Force has federated intelligence collection centers across the United States. These centers fuse and disseminate multiple forms of intelligence (Multi-INT) to supported organizations and fielded forces. AFSOC's premier intelligence unit, the 11th Intelligence Squadron (IS), is located at Hurlburt Field, FL. Its ability to collect, collate and fuse Multi-INTs has made it highly requested by special operations teams. Mr. Dan Snyder, an intelligence analysis for over 30 years currently working at AFSOC Headquarters A2 Directorate states, "AFSOC's RPAs are only an input, the intelligence fusion is where the magic happens. Our fusion capabilities make intelligence collection SOF. Our habitual relationship with the supported unit is the best. They want what we provide."[28] When asked about the relationship between the 11th IS and AFSOC RPA units, Lt Col Glenn from AFSOC/A2 states, "They are an input, a very good input, but just an input to the overall picture we develop."[29] Currently, the intelligence community does not consider the data AFSOC RPAs provide as "special." There is a missing habitual relationship between the RPAs collecting the data and the teams processing the data. This is not a SOF-like relationship.

AFSOC should combine RPA crews and the PED crews in a single room during mission execution. The teams will brief, execute and debrief missions together. This paper has previously demonstrated how operational teams that operate together have synergistic effects. This also applies to RPA and PED crews. Today, PED crews receive real-time supported unit requests for information (RFI), and try to direct RPA crews in order meet the RFIs. RPA crews

receive these RFIs second hand, without user's intent, in non-aviation terms resulting in a slow, frustrating and not very efficient nor effective manner. RFIs given to the PED teams but not the RPA crews lower situational awareness and lead to mission ineffectiveness. Similarly, RPA crews receive information from supported ground teams or other airborne platforms via radio calls or Microsoft Internet Relay Chats (mIRC) that PED crews do not. PED reduction in situational awareness makes them less effective and efficient. By uniting RPA and PED crews in the same room, information will flow much easier and communication will become more effective. RPA crews will share information with PED crews and PED crews will gather better data as they are able to better converse with RPA crews. AFSOC tested this arrangement for a three-month period and both RPA crews and PED crews expressed better situational awareness and better coordination. Habitual relationships between RPA crews who collect the data and PED crews who process the data will lead to better mission execution. However, there is another benefit to OPS/PED integration.

An RPA crew consists of three members, while the PED crew consists of six members; totaling nine crewmembers. Many of the duties are duplicative during mission execution. By putting crews together, AFSOC is anticipating a reduction in required billets. Col (retired) Lane anticipates a three-billet reduction per CAP with zero degradation in mission execution.[30] Col Jordan emphasizes, "Combining RPA Ops with RPA intelligence combines 'special' intelligence gatherers with 'special' intelligence processors to create an overall 'Special Operations' product."[31] OPS/PED integration can be critical to making SOF RPAs.

Analyzing Employment initiatives with the first Four SOF Truths

Measuring the new employment initiatives against the SOF truths demonstrates the effectiveness they have on making AFSOC RPAs more SOF-like. The first SOF truth

emphasizes people over equipment. The JORTS cycle emphasizes relationships through all three phases. Combining RPAs and PED crews together accentuates human interaction as the priority. The MCE/LRE forward concept brings the teams together downrange in combat collocated with SOF C2. Bringing SOF warriors together in training, combat, and in the intelligence-gathering arena stresses the importance placed on human interaction. Overall, these new employment methods fulfill the first SOF truth.

SOF truth number two focuses on quality and not quantity. MCE/LRE brings a greater quality by connecting RPA crews with ground forces. RPA/PED integration creates better quality through the flow of information and situational awareness. Both initiatives save manpower and consequently create more training opportunities. The JORTS cycle integration emphasizes building a stronger team, and thus a better force. SOF C2 incorporates SOF RPAs to more SOF missions. All employment initiatives satisfy the second SOF truth.

SOF truth number three is SOF cannot be massed produced. MCE/LRE forward is a SOF-specific concept. OPS/PED integration is a SOF-specific employment. JORTS cycle integration builds a specialized, integrated team with strong habitual relationships within SOF. SOF C2 ensures they fight together in combat. These initiatives are unique and not taught during initial qualification training. They develop in a SOF environment with SOF warriors. These employment initiatives create a more SOF-like force according to SOF truth number three.

SOF truth number four states SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur. The time to act is now. As troops leave Afghanistan, the follow-on commitment remains undefined. Building stronger, more effective, more efficient Special Forces enables AFSOC RPAs to be more responsive for future SOF commitments. SOF C2 will enable quick response wherever and whenever needed. AFSOC RPAs will join the SOF ranks and be ready to support when called

upon. There will always be a need for competent SOF forces. Establishing these characteristics now will ensure SOF RPAs are ready before the next emergency occurs. SOF truth number four complete.

Conclusion

AFSOC added RPAs to their inventory without adding the SOF culture. There is high potential to achieve Special Operation's capabilities, if AFSOC revolutionizes how it conducts SOF RPA operations. This paper has identified several initiatives focused on making their RPA squadrons more SOF-like. When AFSOC dedicates to changing the way it conducts training and how it presents forces for combat operations, there will be an increase in SOF effectiveness. The AFSOC RPA initiatives presented in this paper fully embrace the first four SOF truths. Bringing AFSOC's RPA forces into the SOF fold as soon as possible is critical. This paper demonstrated the initiatives required to develop a unique SOF RPA force through SOF-specific training and employment. By following through on these initiatives, AFSOC will convert their RPAs flown by SOF units into a SOF RPA force.

Notes

[1] Senate Armed Services Committee, *Posture Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven,* Commander, United States Special Operations Command, 112th Cong., 6 March 2012.

[2] Lt Col Peter Lehew (Previous 3rd SOS Director of Operations and Detachment Commander), interview by the author, 14 Nov 2013.

[3] U.S. Special Operations Command Fact Book 2012, *The Quiet Professionals,* USSOCOM Public Affairs, 48.

[4] Col William Lane (Division Chief, ISR and Strike Requirements, Headquarters AFSOC), interview by the author 25 Oct 2013.

[5] Brig Gen Albert Elton II (Headquarters AFSOC Requirements Directorate, previous 27 SOW/CC and qualified in MQ-1), interview by author 25 Oct 2013.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Col Lewis Jordan (Headquarters AFSOC Requirements Directorate), interview by the author, 25 Oct 2013.

[8] Col William Lane (Division Chief, ISR and Strike Requirements, Headquarters AFSOC), interview by the author 25 Oct 2013

[9] Lt Col Peter Lehew (Previous 3rd SOS Director of Operations and Detachment Commander), interview by the author, 14 Nov 2013.

[10] Maj Jonathan Graham (Previous 3rd SOS Mission Commander 2005-2009), interview by the author, 11 Nov 3013.

[11] Gen Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (Naval Institute Press, 2001), 82.

[12] Senate Armed Services Committee, *Posture Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven,* Commander, United States Special Operations Command, 112th Cong., 6 March 2012.

[13] Ibid.

[14] U.S. Special Operations Command Fact Book 2012, *The Quiet Professionals,* USSOCOM Public Affairs, 48.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Senate Armed Services Committee, *Posture Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven,* Commander, United States Special Operations Command, 112th Cong., 6 March 2012.

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